



Verspeeten Family Cancer Centre Catalyst Grants for Translational Cancer Research, 2025 Competition

DEADLINE: Friday, October 10, 2025 at 12:00 NOON

Research Grant Themes **ONLY** for:

Translational Breast Cancer Research
Translational Ovarian Cancer Research
Translational Pancreatic Cancer Research
Translational Prostate Cancer Research
Translational Immuno-oncology Research
Keith Samitt Translational Cancer Research Grant (Undesignated)

Funding Available:

Breast (2 X \$25K)
Ovarian (1 X \$25K)
Pancreatic (2 X \$25K)
Prostate (2 X \$25K)
Immuno-oncology (1 x \$25K)
Undesignated (3 X \$25K)

Guidelines for Applicants

VFCC Catalyst Grants for Translational Cancer Research

The VFCC Catalyst Grants for Cancer Research and Education are to support cancer research to discover and develop new knowledge that leads to improvement in cancer prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Applications designed to promote and achieve these translational goals are encouraged. Cancer research will be viewed in its broadest sense (including basic, clinical, health outcomes, and other research components relevant to cancer).

It is important for applicants to recognize that The VFCC Catalyst Grants are meant to fund 'new research ideas' of a translational nature and provide seed funding that will support the acquisition of data to support new grant applications to national (i.e., CIHR) and international funding agencies (e.g., NIH). This aspect of each application will factor into the adjudication process and applicants should take advantage of Section 3 of the application to make their case in this regard.

Grant themes for the 2025 VFCC Catalyst Grants for Translational Cancer Research Competition:

- Translational Breast Cancer Research
- Translational Ovarian Cancer Research
- Translational Pancreatic Cancer Research
- Translational Prostate Cancer Research
- Translational Immuno-oncology Research
- Keith Samitt Translational Cancer Research Grant (Undesignated)

Eligibility

Applicants fall into 3 categories

- 1. Principal and Co-Principal Applicants:** Lead or co-lead the project. **They must be primary OR cross-appointees to the Western University Department of Oncology.** Their academic appointments must allow them to apply to major provincial, national, and international agencies for peer-reviewed funding. Their place of research is unrestricted and can be at any Western-accredited site (Western campus, SJHC, LHSC and elsewhere). Department of Oncology primary and cross-appointed faculty without formally-assigned wet and/or dry laboratory space and facilities can be Principal Applicants on projects that require such space and facilities but there must be, at a minimum, a Co-Principal Applicant who is formally assigned such space and access to those facilities. **Principal and Co-Principal Applicants may submit an application for only one (1) Catalyst grant in any calendar year. Catalyst Grants are for a 2-year term. The Progress Report (last page of the application form) for previously funded Catalyst applications is heavily considered by the Review Panel when adjudicating current submission from the nominated Principal Applicant.** There can be a maximum of one (1) Principal Applicant and multiple Co-Principal Applicants for any Catalyst grant application. Where only Co-Principal Applicants are named, one must be the Nominated Principal Applicant to whom all correspondence will be addressed. *Curricula vitae* of Principal Applicants and Co-Principal Applicants must be included in the application.

- 2. Co-Applicants:** Participate fully in the project. They may lead some aspects of the project but not the project as a whole. Co-Applicants need not be appointed in the Department of Oncology and may be located at any Western-accredited site. There is no restriction on the number of Co-Applicants on any Catalyst grant application and the number of Catalyst grant applications on which any faculty member is a Co-Applicant is similarly unrestricted. Senior trainees (PhD students, Postdoctoral Fellows, Clinical Residents and Fellows) are eligible to be Co-Applicants, but only if their involvement in the project is exceptional and in a leadership role consistent with Co-Applicant status. If senior trainees are proposed as Co-Applicants, the Principal Applicant or Nominated Principal Applicant **MUST** consult Dr. G. DiMattia (dimattia@uwo.ca) in advance to confirm that they are eligible. Dr. DiMattia (Director, Cancer Research Laboratory Program) operationalizes the Catalyst Grants Competition. *Curricula vitae* of Co-Applicants must be included in the application.
- 3. Collaborators:** Participate partially in some aspects of the project, but with less commitment of time and effort than Co-Applicants (e.g., they may provide occasional advice, reagents, partial editing of manuscripts, *etc.*, without actively engaging in generating and analyzing data). They need not be appointed or cross-appointed to the Western Department of Oncology. There is no restriction on the number of Collaborators on any Catalyst Grant Application. *Curricula vitae* of Collaborators should **not** be included in the application.

Research Proposal Details

Catalyst Grant applications should be based on **a new research idea**. The purpose of the Catalyst Grants Program in Cancer Research are to provide initial seed funding to develop a new research theme that elevates and expands your research program, to purchase equipment or to provide funding for a graduate student (PhD students only), Postdoctoral Fellow or other research personnel. All of these goals can be developed as part of a new cancer research idea. The overarching goal of the Catalyst Grants Program is to facilitate research projects that will go on to form the basis of larger research grant applications to external peer review agencies and/or private companies. **Only research proposals that have not been previously funded will be considered.**

Research Proposal

- A clear, concise description of the proposed research, describing the current state of knowledge about the work proposed with appropriate reference to the literature. It should include relevant work done by the applicant and provide a rationale for choosing particular methods and approaches.
- Submit no more than 6 double-spaced pages, not including references (print size 12 Times New Roman), with 1" margins at top, bottom and sides.
- **The nominated PI must indicate that they hold an official academic appointment in the Dept. of Oncology at Western University on page 1 of the application form.**
- The complete academic affiliations for each applicant must be provided. DO NOT simply indicate i.e., 'thoracic surgery'.
- The entire application must be legible and adhere to the guidelines or it will be rejected.

Scanned applications will not be accepted. Convert the completed application WORD document to a PDF; the signature page can be scanned to a PDF.

- Submit **1 electronic PDF** including signatures and containing all required information by the indicate **deadline** (date and time) to Gail.McConnell@lhsc.on.ca. Do not submit more than one file.
- The address and email of the Principal/Nominated Principal applicant will be used for further communication.
- Fill in the dollar amount requested on the second page of your application.
- Receipt of applications will be acknowledged by email to the Principal Applicant **only**. Applications will be adjudicated by a VFCC Catalyst Grants Review Panel (including London cancer researchers from multiple disciplines and backgrounds). **The nominated Principal Investigator of each application** will be notified in writing of the outcome of the competition. All successful grants will be administered through the LHSC Research Institute except the Organoid Catalyst Grant which goes through Western University.
- Successful applicant(s) will need to complete a LHSC RI ReDA & LHSC FORM-D to gain access to the funds. This information will be supplied by Gail.McConnell@lhsc.on.ca and will be coordinated through Richard McClelland (Research Operations Manager, CRLP).

Funds May Be Used For

- Expendable supplies.
- Technical support (not including research trainees) *Please contact your HR department for information on benefit costs required in addition to salary.*
Research Trainees: (note: support for trainees will **not** be provided under the Breast Cancer Category) **PhD students** are eligible for stipend support if they have been in their graduate training program for less than 4 years. Awards for support beyond 4 years in the PhD program will not be considered. Awards will be for 1 year to allow time for application to external agencies. One additional year of support may be applied for in exceptional circumstances. Awards will be for \$20,000 + supplies up to the maximum value available for the disease site category. **Postdoctoral/Clinical Research Fellows** are only eligible to apply no later than 2 years after their PhD degree or completion of post-graduate clinical training, respectively. Clinical Research Fellows must spend **at least** 75% of their time on research. Awards will be for 1 year. Applications for renewal for one further year will be considered only under exceptional circumstances. Maximum: \$25,000 per year. Include CVs for both the supervisor and PhD student/Postdoctoral Fellow/Clinical Research Fellow (no more than 5 pages each) and identify the total stipend to be paid and the source of necessary supplementary funding. It is expected that Postdoctoral /Clinical Research Fellows will receive stipends appropriate to their level of training and at least that recommended by Tri-Council funding agencies. Transcripts are required for PhD students.
- Services (commercial preparation of reagents, equipment rental, equipment maintenance, *etc.*)
- Equipment (requests will be considered pending sufficient justification); 3 quotes are needed

Appendices

- **One page is allowed for preliminary data.** Colour Figures and diagrams should not be

appended as black and white scanned images as they will lose impact and may be unintelligible to the reviewers.

- Include letters of support from all collaborators.
- For clinical trial proposals, one additional page describing the relevant sample size/power analysis is mandatory.
- DO NOT submit the entire clinical trial documentation as an appendix.

Additional Research Grant Application Guidelines

- Grants submitted for specific disease site themes **may** be considered for funding in the “Undesignated” category, contingent on the availability of funds. Applicants are encouraged to choose all disease site categories which apply to their proposal.
- Use of the **current** application form is mandatory. Previous application forms **will be rejected**.
- **The nominated Principal Applicant can be the principal investigator on only one grant in any calendar year.**
- Applications for support in the **Breast Cancer** category must have a focus on the understanding, prevention, tracking and/or treatment of metastatic breast cancer. In addition, applications for Breast Cancer funding must involve both basic science and clinical investigators. Projects not meeting these criteria will **not** be considered for funding in this category.
- Applications for support in the **Immuno-oncology** category must have a focus on the understanding, prevention, tracking and/or treatment of cancer from an immunologic perspective and projects must be translational in nature, with direct relevance to a clinical question/problem. The project proposal should involve a trainee(s) as a co-applicant with a clear indication of the trainee’s contribution to the proposal.
- LHSF-derived funds must be administered through the office of the Director, Regional Cancer Program at London Health Sciences Centre. **A Progress Report must be provided for an VFCC Catalyst Grant awarded to the Principal Applicant(s) from 2023 and 2024.** Include detailed information about submitted or published manuscripts, reports, patents or other evidence of dissemination of results. Grants from the Fund will not be awarded unless the report is included. All funds must be used only for the purpose for which they were awarded, and funds unspent at the end of a 24-month period must be returned to the VFCC.
- Where appropriate, research involving humans, animals, and/or biohazards, must be approved by the University of Western Ontario "Health Sciences Standing Committee on Human Research", the "Council on Animal Care", and/or the UWO Biohazard Committee.
- Applications **must** be signed by the Chair of your academic department or in the case of Cancer Research Laboratory Program faculty, the Scientific Director. These signatures confirm that the nominated Principal Applicant has the support (space and time) to carry out the proposed research.
- Travel funds are not eligible for support.
- Funds to purchase computers are **not** eligible unless the circumstances are exceptional (provide justification).
- Funds for summer student stipends are **not** eligible.
- Cover pages are not allowed. *The first page of the Application Form must be the first page of your application.*

Period of Support:

1 year, with up to 24 months to spend the grant funding. Unspent funds after the 2-year funding period will be repatriated to the Catalyst Grant Competition.

Amount:

Maximum dollar value of the research grant will depend on the disease site category as indicated on the first page of this document.

Research Proposal Adjudication

- Applicants must provide evidence that the project has the potential to directly or indirectly generate continued support from an appropriate external agency (*e.g.*, NSERC, Canadian Cancer Society Research Institute, CIHR, *etc.*) or private sector partner.
- Applications will be considered on the basis of scientific merit, feasibility, originality, translatability to patients, and scientific track record of the applicant(s) (*i.e.*, previous level of grant support as a primary investigator in research grants, contribution to peer-reviewed literature, and active participation in research). However, new investigators without a substantial scientific track record are encouraged to apply since the first four criteria will be of primary importance.
- Progress on previously funded Catalyst Grants research projects is heavily considered by the Review Panel during the adjudication process

Catalyst Grant Stewardship

Successful applicants must provide Progress Reports to the Catalyst Grants Governing Council describing all presentations, publications and successful grant applications that have resulted from the awarded funds. This is critical information to maintain funding from the various sources and to grow the Catalyst Grant Competition. This report should be submitted **within 24 months** after the award (1/2 page) to Gail.McConnell@lhsc.on.ca

Any published research supported by Catalyst funds **MUST** indicate or acknowledge support as outlined below:

Translational Breast Cancer research

“This work was supported by the Verspeeten Family Cancer Centre Catalyst Grants Program using funds provided by the Breast Cancer Canada”.

Translational Ovarian Cancer research

“This work was supported by the Verspeeten Family Cancer Centre Catalyst Grants Program using funds provided by the London Run for Ovarian Cancer”.

Translational Pancreatic Cancer research

“This work was supported by the Verspeeten Family Cancer Centre Catalyst Grants Program using funds provided by the Baker Centre for Pancreatic Cancer”.

Translational Prostate Cancer research

“This work was supported by the Verspeeten Family Cancer Centre Catalyst Grants Program using funds provided by Donors through the London Health Sciences Foundation”.

Translational Immuno-oncology research

“This work was supported by the Verspeeten Family Cancer Centre Catalyst Grants Program using funds provided by the Translational Immuno-Oncology Research Group & the Centre for Translational Cancer Research”.

Undesignated Translational Cancer research

“This work was supported by the Verspeeten Family Cancer Centre Catalyst Grants Program using funds provided through the London Health Sciences Foundation for the Keith Samitt Translational Research Grant”.

“Please submit the following” checklist

- ☐ **Do NOT include**, but check appropriate boxes for Approval Forms (or *applied* for) (Human Ethics, Animal Use, Biohazard, if applicable) *Approval letters from the relevant institution will be requested before disbursing funds to successful applicants*
- ☐ Application signed by the appropriate academic designates
- ☐ Summary of Research Proposal
- ☐ Response to Previous Reviews, if applicable (one page MAXIMUM)
- ☐ Research Proposal
- ☐ CVs of Principal Investigator and Co-Applicant(s) NOTE: *CV of Collaborators NOT required*
- ☐ CV (and transcript for graduate student) of personnel to be funded on the Catalyst Grant (i.e., Ph.D. student, Post-doctoral Fellow)
- ☐ Budget Module
- ☐ Details of Financial Assistance (For equipment requests, ensure 3 quotes are attached)
- ☐ **Progress Report, if applicable. New funding will not be awarded without a Progress Report on the most recent VFCC Catalyst Grant award to the Principal Investigator.**